CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this project is to develop a new management plan for the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (RRCNCA), which addresses and updates management policy for the present and future needs of RRC. Until June of 1995, management of Red Rock Canyon (RRC) was guided by the "Red Rock Canyon Master Plan" which was developed in 1976. Several changes have occurred since 1976 which require an updated plan to manage RRCNCA and deal with current issues and use problems.

In November of 1990, Congress passed the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area Establishment Act designating RRC as a National Conservation Area (NCA). The legislation includes general management direction to be followed and requires the development of a new management plan. The legislation calls for providing recreation opportunities allowing the public to enjoy and appreciate the unique natural setting which composes Red Rock Canyon, but the primary direction is to conserve and protect these natural resources.

Other concerns contributing to the need for a new management plan include visitor use that has increased at a faster rate than anticipated and the accelerated popularity of recreational activities that were not a factor when the 1976 Master Plan was developed. The population of Las Vegas was 371,260 in 1976, and has now increased to well over a million, with Las Vegas being among the fasted growing cities in the United States. Current projections expect the population to reach 2 million by the year 2005. The westward expansion of the Las Vegas community has now reached RRCNCA's eastern boundary with the development of the Red Rock Country Club immediately adjacent to the RRCNCA boundary south of Charleston Blvd. At present, the community planning has been completed for all of the remaining buffer zone and the initial transportation system implementation is well under way.

There has been a tremendous growth in recreation activities including hiking, scenic viewing, horse riding, mountain biking and technical rock climbing. In 1976, technical rock climbing and mountain biking were relatively insignificant as far as requiring special attention and thus no mention of them was made in the Master Plan. At present, both activities are very significant in RRCNCA and management of both activities needs to be addressed. To add to the complexity of the increased recreational use, there is an increasing interest in commercial guiding of all of the above mentioned activities. With the increased interest in commercial and recreational activities, it is important to determine carrying capacities for the various

interests and set allowable limits.

In June of 1995, the Interim General Management Plan (IGMP) was approved to replace the 1976 Master Plan. The IGMP was devised from the Draft GMP completed in April of 1994. In November of 1994, Congress passed legislation to expand the boundary of the NCA. The expansion legislation more than doubled the size of RRCNCA, and the planning process was re-initiated to design a comprehensive plan covering the entire acreage. The IGMP is now in effect, but it is only designed to provide administrative direction and defers controversial action proposals to the final GMP planning process for additional analysis. The Proposed and Final GMPs will consider the entire NCA as it exists at present and place more emphasis on biodiversity analysis than had been done in the previous planning process.

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DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AREA

Red Rock Canyon is located in Clark County, Nevada approximately 15 miles west of the city of Las Vegas. It is bordered on the west by the Spring Mountain range, extends north to the mouths of Lee Canyon and Cold Creek and extends south to include the Bird Spring Range. A substantial portion of the eastern boundary is the western limit of the Summerlin Master Planned Community. Lands immediately adjacent to RRCNCA are now being developed.

RRCNCA consists of approximately 196,000 acres. Acreage may vary from source to source due to minor adjustments to the NCA boundary and land which has been acquired through several exchanges. The latest adjustments occurred with the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act, passed in 1998. Some of the boundary changes designated in the Act follow land forms as opposed to section lines and will require land surveys to be done before exact boundary location and true acreage can be determined.

RRC has long been a popular location for public recreation and leisure due to unique geological and ecological characteristics occurring in a natural setting so close in proximity to a major population center. The geologic features of the area includes an abundance of limestone and sandstone formations, including unique features such as older limestone covering and protecting younger and less weather resistant sandstone. The result is a 3000 foot escarpment running north-south along the west side of RRC. Running along the east side of the Scenic Drive are the Calico Hills, which are another magnificent sandstone formation displaying shades of red, brown, buff and gray. Weathering has added form and texture, including potholes, domes, and arches.

There are two wilderness study areas (WSAs) which have major portions located within RRCNCA. The Pine Creek WSA includes the escarpment along the western border of and extends onto the adjacent Spring Mountains National Recreation Area (SMNRA). The La Madre WSA is north of the Pine Creek WSA and the two are separated by the Rocky Gap Road. It includes La Madre Mountain, with the peak elevation recorded at 8754 feet, the highest point in the NCA. The lowest elevation occurs along the east boundary of the NCA just south of the Lucky Strike road, and is 3000 feet.

Water is not a plentiful resource, but due to the past geologic fault activity and the permeable strata, RRCNCA contains over 40 springs as well as many tinajas (natural catchment basins). This creates a reliable source of water for wildlife, provides some unique ecological environments and allows for higher concentrations of plants and animals than can be found in the surrounding Mojave Desert. Many species of plants and animals

are endemic to southern Nevada with some being found only within the Spring Mountains ecosystem.

RRCNCA also offers a wealth of cultural resources from both historic and prehistoric eras. To date, studies have shown the presence of human inhabitants as early as 3500 B.C. and possibly several thousand years earlier. Some of the cultural resources include shelter caves, roasting pits, rock art (petroglyphs and pictographs) and a portion of the Spanish Trail.

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

The GMP planning process was re-initiated in September of 1995 with scoping meetings held to gather comments and concerns from the public concerning the management of RRCNCA. The focus of the process is to determine the key issues which need to be addressed in the planning process. The key issues are derived from the comments and concerns collected at the public scoping meetings, from comments mailed in during the scoping phase and from comments from local, State and Federal agencies. To assist the BLM in interpreting the data collected, a planning group was formed from members of the Las Vegas community, representing a diverse range of interests (see Chapter 5 - Consultation and Coordination). Not surprisingly, the 8 key issues which were developed in the first planning process, resulting in the Interim General Management Plan (IGMP), all resurfaced along with an additional 4 issues to be considered. The final list of issues includes the following (listed in no particular order):

1. **What measures should be taken to preserve biodiversity?**

2. **How should riparian areas be protected?**

3. **How should wild horses and burros be managed?**

4. **How should cultural and paleontological resources be managed?**

5. **What opportunity settings (Management Emphasis Areas) should be offered to visitors?**

6. **What recreation opportunities should be offered to visitors and how should they be managed?**

7. **How should road and trail systems be managed to provide for hiking, bicycling, horse riding, motor vehicle use, and other possible uses, while protecting the environment?**

8. **What camping opportunities and facilities should be provided?**

9. **How should technical rock climbing be managed?**

10. **To what extent should target shooting be allowed?**

11. **To what extent should commercial purposes be allowed?**

12. **How do we properly recognize and provide for Native American concerns?**

EXPANDED DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES

The issues were further studied and discussed in more depth for clarification by the planning group. The following is a look at background information for each issue, along with a more defined description and some concerns and opportunities that arose during this process.

ISSUE 1

What measures should be taken to preserve biodiversity?

BACKGROUND

Biodiversity involves all components of an environment, their interrelation and the ecological processes and cycles that occur and sustain that environment. To preserve biodiversity, an ecosystem must be considered in its entirety as opposed to the individual components. To manage biodiversity in Red Rock Canyon, the proper level of geographic consideration should be the Spring Mountains ecosystem, of which the entire NCA would be a part.

RRCNCA biodiversity is of significant quality. One important reason is species diversity, particularly that of reptiles, bats and other mammals, birds, and especially plants. Another key factor is rarity of both species and plant communities. RRCNCA hosts two federally-listed Threatened & Endangered species, and 43 other Species of Concern. Of these species, 9 are southern Nevada endemics, 8 are Spring Mountain endemics, and 4 occur nowhere else on earth. Finally, RRCNCA biodiversity is also significant for its ecological integrity. Few intact landscape ecosystems survive in today's world of widespread habitat fragmentation and loss, let alone those which are entirely protected under public land ownership. As such, the Spring Mountains ecosystem (RRCNCA; USFS Spring Mountains National Recreation Area) affords the exceedingly rare opportunity to preserve intact, landscape-scale biodiversity.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Human use impacts, non-native animal disturbances, exotic plant invasions, and ecological process disruptions all have the potential to adversely impact the functioning of the Spring Mountains ecosystem. As such, all must be managed appropriately to avoid adverse impacts to the biodiversity of RRCNCA, which is included within the Spring Mountains ecosystem. Appropriate management must consider the full interrelational health and

vitality of the Spring Mountains ecosystem as opposed to species by species consideration.

CONCERNS

All planning and management efforts should proceed from the recognition that each NCA land use action affects the integrity of the Spring Mountains ecosystem, and this carries the potential to incrementally diminish biodiversity of RRCNCA.

Cumulative effects on the environment should be an evaluation criterion in all management decisions.

Exotic plants and non-native animals should be aggressively controlled due to their severe impact on both native biota and the Spring Mountains ecosystem.

Human access should be recognized as a critical biodiversity preservation factor.

To the extent possible, biodiversity preservation efforts should include ecological processes, such as wildfire.

OPPORTUNITIES

Protect and restore springs and riparian areas as sensitive habitats.

Protect rare springsnail species (Pyrgulopsis spp.) and their habitats at Lost Creek Spring, Willow Spring, La Madre Spring and Red Spring.

Revive the Pine Creek Natural Area designation in order to limit human access in to the North Fork Canyon biodiversity; hotspot(ie, high sensitivity and diversity area).

Protect the Bridge Mountain biodiversity hotspot.

Prevent federal listing of the RRCNCA endemic Blue Diamond cholla (Opuntia whipplei var. multigeniculata).

Protect bat Species of Concern, with particular attention to maternity roost habitat (caves & mines).

Emphasize public education efforts to promote awareness of biodiversity preservation.

Cooperatively manage the Spring Mountains ecosystem with the USFS, and with assistance from other agencies, citizens groups, academia, etc.

ISSUE 2

How should riparian areas be protected?

BACKGROUND

Riparian areas are essentially the transition zone between permanently saturated wetlands and dry uplands. Riparian areas occur adjacent to flowing rivers and streams, and also along the shores of permanent lakes and reservoirs. Permanent water must be present, but can be either surface (standing water) or subsurface (saturated soil). Riparian areas are recognizable by their plant species and associations, which differ markedly from the upland species which grow just outside the zone of permanent water. Upland plants can tolerate extended drought periods. Riparian plants need at least moist soil, and wetland species require saturation. Ephemeral streams and washes channel water only during precipitation episodes, and are not riparian areas, despite the deceptive appearance of such species as Seep willow (Baccharis spp.) and Rabbitbrush (Chrysothamnus spp.), which are greener than their upland neighbors.

RRCNCA has numerous riparian areas, owing to the unique conditions of the Spring Mountains. Elevation, topography, and geology combine to support an unusually large number of perennially and intermittently flowing springs. Literally, RRCNCA and the Spring Mountains are an oasis in the Mojave and Great Basin Desert. The physical variety of its habitats and the abundance of its waters directly explain the unique biodiversity of the Spring Mountains. Springs create a continuum of soil conditions, from wet to moist to dry, each sustaining differently adapted to their respective vegetative habitats. Consequently, springs and riparian areas are the epicenter of RRCNCA biodiversity. This includes many of the area's endemic, rare and sensitive species, some of which are exclusively adapted to riparian conditions. In fact, the known world population of a recently discovered springsnail (Pyrgulopsis nov. la) exists in one spring. The ecological importance of RRCNCA riparian areas is not limited to considerations of diversity and sensitivity. As with all desert waters, springs and riparian areas attract and concentrate the populations of area mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

In order to protect riparian habitat, appropriate management of human, burro and horse use needs to be developed for riparian vicinities.

CONCERNS

Riparian areas are RRCNCA's most ecologically critical resources, and also the most susceptible to environmental disturbance and eventual destruction.

Recreational use patterns tend to center on riparian areas. Trail braiding, vegetation loss, streambank erosion, and wildlife disruptions are on-going impacts.

Wild horses and burros cluster in riparian areas, resulting in soil churning, plant loss wildlife disruption, and springflow failures.

Most riparian areas already host the invasive exotic Salt cedar (Tamarix ramosissima), which not only displaces native plants, but can also lower water tables to the point of springflow failure.

Existing pipe and trough spring developments benefit wild horses/burros and humans, to the detriment of riparian biodiversity and proper ecological functioning.

OPPORTUNITIES

Minimize any developments that would attract additional visitation from humans or non-native animals.

Monitor use impacts in riparian areas of most concern.

Pursue an AML for wild horses and burros.

Implement measures to enhance rehabilitation of damaged spring locations.

Enhance visitor awareness and cooperation of riparian protection measures.

ISSUE 3

How should wild horses and burros be managed?

BACKGROUND

Wild horses and burros are non-native species in the Spring Mountains ecosystem and contribute serious impacts to the NCA environment. Numerous springs have been severely impacted by their sustained over-use, to the extent of bank erosion, soil churning, and significant springflow reductions (or failures in some cases). Since wild horses and burros habitually reside near water sources and springs, they are also causing extensive damage

to riparian plant species and vegetative communities through their grazing, trampling, soil churning, erosion, and springflow reduction effects. Many of RRCNCA's rare and sensitive plants are riparian species, meaning that biodiversity is also directly jeopardized. The indirect environmental impacts are also of consequence. Chronic soil and vegetation disturbance creates site conditions favoring invasive exotic plants, which typically outcompete and displace native plant species. Because the two most common RRCNCA exotics are both fire-prone annual grasses, the larger impact is the establishment of recurring wildfire cycles that further perpetuate the site disturbance conditions favorable to these exotic invaders. Wild horses and burros threaten not only the species diversity, but also the biodiversity represented by plant community compositions and successional patterns. Another ecosystem wide impact results from their network of trails, which increase human access into relatively undisturbed habitats.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Wild horses and burros can have severe impacts on riparian habitats, through both direct and indirect means. They should be managed for their aesthetic and emotional value to the public, but strictly within the constraint that they do not jeopardize the biodiversity and functionality of the Spring Mountains ecosystem.

CONCERNS

Wild horses and burro have the potential to exert significant adverse impacts to ecosystem management and biodiversity preservation.

Public sentiment and political pressure may be strong obstacles to implementing RRCNCA management policies and actions that are ecologically appropriate.

Riparian areas are the most ecologically critical RRCNCA resources, yet they are the most severely impacted by wild horses and burros.

OPPORTUNITIES

Prioritize public education campaigns focused on wild horse and burro management and concerns.

Produce quantified carrying capacity assessments for Red Rock, formalize NCA herd Appropriate Management Level (AML), and conform management actions accordingly (removals, pipeline/trough projects, animal gathers, road crossing facilities).

ISSUE 4

How Should Cultural And Paleontological Resources Be Managed?

BACKGROUND

The study of cultural resources enhances our present knowledge of plants, animals and man's interactions with his environmental and cultural habitats. Examining past cultural sites allows us the opportunity to understand the processes that have developed present ecological and cultural environments. The more intact a cultural site is, the more likely it is to yield valuable scientific and cultural information.

RRCNCA is rich with cultural resources left by Native Americans, early settlers and miners in the region. One of the two major Native American cultures represented, the Anasazi, no longer exists and their history is irreplaceable when lost. The Paiute culture remains are both prehistoric and historic and contain information regarding man's adaptation to the Mohave Desert. The historic cultural resources consist of mining, ranching and Civilian Conservation Corps thematic periods. These historic resources have a better written record, however, their surface remains can be as easily destroyed by natural and man made actions as the prehistoric cultural resources.

The increasing recreation demands and visitation at RRC has affected the integrity of many cultural resources. The majority of cultural sites are found in locations which continue to entice human visitation. The impacts are more often a result of carelessness and overuse of the sites from lack of awareness than from a conscious effort to vandalize.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Determine the best way to manage cultural and paleontological resources to allow for scientific study and public interest, while protecting site integrity. Recreational use in sensitive areas needs to be controlled.

CONCERNS

Uncontrolled or undermanaged visitor use results in cultural resource degradation.

Lack of public understanding results in unintentional and intentional damage to sites.

In general the public does not have a good understanding of the significance of cultural resources and the need to maintain these resources in an undisturbed condition.

OPPORTUNITIES

Develop a program for interpretation and public education designed to promote an understanding and appreciation for the cultures of this areas historic and prehistoric past.

Determine the best way to allow for public visitation of actual cultural sites with minimum impact to the resources.

Manage other recreational use in a manor that avoids disruption of sensitive cultural sites.

Inclusion of Native American input in management of cultural sites enhances knowledge and site protection.

ISSUE 5

What opportunity settings (Management Emphasis Areas) should be offered to visitors?

BACKGROUND

During the scoping process, it was determined that in order for this plan to have any longevity, it needs to be developed in a manner that considers the possibility of additional actions or modified management techniques in the future. The tool devised to allow for this flexibility is the "Management Emphasis Area" (MEA) concept. It is fashioned after the "Recreation Opportunity Spectrum", a system developed by the U.S. Forest Service.

The MEAs are a collection of five settings, which offer a range of activity level and development to occur. Each setting is defined by a selection of characteristics which include access, remoteness, naturalness, number of social encounters, and the degree of site management and facilities available. The settings range from having an abundance of each of the above characteristics, on one end of the spectrum, to having little or none on the other. Once the settings are assigned to areas within RRCNCA, only actions and developments that are consistent with the assigned characteristics will be allowed in any setting.

Use of MEAs will make it possible for future actions to be incorporated into RRCNCA if they are consistent with the defined settings. This also eliminates the inclusion of future actions not consistent with NCA values.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

RRCNCA needs to offer a range of opportunity settings for recreation experiences that are consistent with biodiversity objectives.

CONCERNS

With the rapid rate of growth and change in the vicinity, the GMP could become outdated in only a few years.

ISSUE 6

What recreation opportunities should be offered to visitors and how should they be managed?

BACKGROUND

The governing document for Red Rock Canyon, prior to the Interim General Management Plan, was the Clark County Management Framework Plan (MFP), which was approved in January of 1984. The MFP gives direction on the management of BLM lands that are within Clark County, including RRC. The direction put forth, concerning RRC, was that it should be managed primarily as a recreational resource with other planning policy being subordinate to the recreation plan. This was actually done to allow for public appreciation of the outstanding resources RRC offers and with the intent of protecting the resources from other more potentially impacting uses.

In November of 1990, stronger measures were taken to protect the natural resources, with the passage of the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area Establishment Act. The Act withdraws RRC from certain high impacting activities and focuses on management more in harmony with the resources. Thus, recreation opportunities provided should focus on appreciating the existing natural resources. Activities not necessarily dependent on RRCNCA resources should be considered for other more appropriate locations.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Recreation opportunities need to be developed and managed in a manner that will allow the public to enjoy the natural environment of RRCNCA. These opportunities need to be compatible with the natural resources, so that future generations have the same chance to appreciate RRCNCA.

CONCERNS

Uncontrolled or undermanaged activities could result in resource damage.

There are an abundance of recreational activities that could take place in RRCNCA, but those that do, should relate to the resources of the NCA; they should not occur in RRCNCA just because it is a convenient location.

There are several recreational uses that are appropriate activities in RRCNCA, but as participation increases they may approach levels that RRCNCA can no longer accommodate.

OPPORTUNITY

Merge the management planning of recreation and biodiversity to assure both are properly administered.

ISSUE 7

How should road and trail systems be managed to provide for hiking, bicycling, horse riding, motor vehicle use, and other possible uses, while protecting the environment?

BACKGROUND

There is quite a diversity of roads and trails throughout RRCNCA. Paved roads are limited to the Scenic Drive and four State Routes dispersed throughout the lower elevations of the NCA. Dirt roads are numerous and range from bladed roads, allowing easy two-wheel drive access, to fairly obscure 2- track routes pioneered throughout more remote areas of the NCA. There are no off-road opportunities for any motor vehicles in the NCA. All motor vehicles are limited to designated roads. The roads and trails have been inventoried in the core NCA, and the IGMP set direction as to which would be officially designated and which would be closed. Most of the hiking, equestrian, and mountain biking trails planned in the IGMP have been developed, although many need formal designation on the ground and comprehensive trail maps to alleviate visitor confusion. Although most of the trail system is in place, some trails need to be revisited to determine designation of appropriate user groups.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Opportunities need to be provided for hiking, horse riding, bicycling and motor vehicle driving. The first priority in providing these opportunities must be the welfare of the natural environment.

CONCERNS

Trail and road systems need to be in coordination with SMNRA, Summerlin and Clark County.

Trail location and construction needs to be done in a manner that will eliminate existing braiding and discourage braiding in the future.

ISSUE 8

In addition to the selected campground location, what camping opportunities and facilities should be provided?

BACKGROUND

Since the early 1980s, camping in Red Rock has been restricted (with minimal enforcement) to the Oak Creek Campground, the Black Velvet campsite and areas above 5,000 feet elevation. The impacts of camping have become a larger issue since the interest in and reputation of Red Rock's year-round climbing opportunities became more well known in the last ten years. Red Rock also became a convenient location for long-term transients who either were working in the area temporarily or homeless.

The issue involving a formal designated campground was resolved with the completion of the IGMP. The 13 Mile Campground has reached the stage of development where it is ready to open for public use, although there is still additional development to be completed. Other areas used as permanent or temporary campgrounds are now closed or will be in the near future.

With the passage of Public Law 103-450, the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area Boundary Expansion, two large tracts of land, equaling the total acreage of the original NCA, were added. They include the area north of La Madre Mountain, taking in Kyle and Lee Canyons, and an area to the south of the original NCA, taking in the Bird Springs Range. These areas have been fairly liberal in regards to camping, with the main regulation being a 14 day stay limit at any particular location. There was no analysis done for these areas during the planning process leading to the IGMP, but they are now part of the NCA and a higher level of regard is now placed on resource impacts.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Prior to inclusion into RRCNCA in 1994, the expansion lands were managed under the general 14 day camping limit for BLM lands. As additions to the NCA, what camping policies are now appropriate?

CONCERNS

Campers are naturally drawn to areas which cannot absorb continuous human impacts, such as riparian zones.

Restrictions in the core area could result in increased use in the expansion lands, causing unacceptable impacts.

OPPORTUNITIES

Direct camping to areas which can absorb the additional use without environmental harm.

Protect natural resources, especially riparian areas, with appropriate restrictions on camping.

Demonstrate that protective designations are multiple use in intent and do not necessarily mean increased use restrictions.

ISSUE 9

How should technical rock climbing be managed?

BACKGROUND

Although technical rock climbing has been around for quite some time in one form or another (such as mountaineering), it has increased dramatically in recent years. Several types of climbing take place in RRCNCA including bouldering, sport climbing, traditional climbing and big wall climbing. In fact, RRC climbing has become so popular that it is considered to be among the top five climbing areas in the United States and attracts climbers from all over the would.

Along with the increase in popularity and use, come the associated impacts of that use on the natural resources as well as other user groups. Related concerns include braiding of approach trails, various impacts to rock surfaces, potential impacts to rock art sites, visual intrusion of hardware, slings and brightly clad bodies on rock surfaces, effects on wildlife, and impacts to vegetation. Also of concern is the availability of campsites and parking spots for other visitors when the climbing season is in full swing during the spring and fall months.

One of the more difficult aspects of the climbing issue, to resolve, is the use of permanent anchors (bolting) in wilderness and wilderness study areas. The appropriateness of bolting in wilderness has been and is still being considered at all management levels of several federal agencies. At present, no final determination has been made, and it is up to local management to determine what is appropriate for their particular resource area.

To keep up with the challenge of climbing management, the BLM has worked with the climbing community, including the Access Fund, climbing permittees, local climbing businesses and casual climbing enthusiasts. In general, they have proven to be a very favorable community to work with. Climbing policy is now

included in the Interim General Management Plan (IGMP), but some of those policies will likely change as the Final GMP is developed.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

With the steadily increasing interest in rock climbing, there is a need to manage the activity in a manner that is compatible with the natural resources and the other visiting publics.

CONCERNS

Because of the popularity of climbing in RRCNCA, other interests are often excluded from camping opportunities and parking at overlooks.

> During the spring and fall, when the peak climbing season occurs, Oak Creek campground is normally filled to capacity with climbing enthusiasts. Other groups or individuals looking for camping opportunities are forced to look for other options. The parking areas along the Calico Hills, including Calico I, Calico II and Sandstone Quarry, are also filled to capacity by climbers parking to climb for the day. This excludes the visitors touring the scenery of the Calico Hills from stopping along their tour.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity to improve existing climbing policy as developed in the IGMP.

Enhance raptor management with the cooperative efforts of the BLM and the climbing community.

ISSUE 10

To what extent should shooting be allowed in RRCNCA? (Shooting refers to target practice or random fire arm discharge. It does not refer to legal hunting practices, which are allowed in portions of the NCA in accordance with State regulations.)

BACKGROUND

At present, the only shooting allowed within RRCNCA is at the Desert Sportsman's shooting range. In fact it is illegal to have a loaded firearm in the NCA, except in designated hunting areas during open season.

Although shooting is not allowed, there has been a significant amount occurring throughout roaded portions of RRCNCA. Problems resulting include large collections of refuse and broken bottles

used as targets, vandalism of signs and property attributed to some of the more profound aficionados of the shooting community, and altercations between shooters and trail users. There is a portion of the shooting community that has demonstrated a lack of formal education in the use of firearms, placing other visitors to the area in a potentially hazardous situation.

A question surfaced during the plan scoping process as to whether shooting is an appropriate activity within RRCNCA. The activity does not derive any appreciable value from what the NCA resources have to offer. It could occur equally as well in many places outside of Red Rock Canyon.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

First it is necessary to determine if shooting is an appropriate activity for RRCNCA. If it is deemed appropriate, where would it be allowed to take place and how should it be managed?

In Clark County, all BLM lands are available for recreational target shooting with the exception of those lands within RRCNCA, the Las Vegas Valley, Sunrise Mountain, Nellis Dunes and Apex areas, which are closed to shooting by Clark County ordinance and BLM regulation.

CONCERNS

With the amount of visitor use RRCNCA receives, any unregulated shooting is a safety concern.

Areas within RRCNCA, where target shooting has been taking place, have become trashed with broken glass, kitchen appliances, and other items used as targets.

OPPORTUNITIES

Designation of a safe, suitable shooting area.

> If an area meeting safety and other needs were set aside, it could reduce the amount of illegal and unsafe shooting occurring in other locations within RRCNCA and within the Las Vegas Valley in general.

Do not allow shooting inside the RRCNCA boundaries.

ISSUE 11

To what extent should commercial pursuits be allowed?

BACKGROUND

In the past, commercial permits were issued to anyone who applied, as long as they met the necessary criteria and it was determined that the impacts from the proposed activity would be within acceptable limits. With the growth of the local population and the increasing interest in various activities, such as climbing and mountain biking, visitor use and pressure on the natural resources of RRCNCA have increased dramatically. In 1991, the NCA Manager placed a moratorium on the number of commercial climbing permits that could operate at any one time, until further analysis could be done and general management of the activity could be determined. Since that time, there have been at least 20 additional inquiries for commercial climbing permits, from all over the country. The IGMP also set a limit on the number of guided horse ride permits and set up zones to disperse the use throughout the NCA. Requests from these operators usually include a network of trails that have not been previously planned, an area to set up their base camp, signs and other facilities desired to enhance their operations.

In recent years there have been permit requests for a variety of commercial operations; some are quite innovative. Besides those activities mentioned above, the list includes jeep tours, guided hiking tours, night hikes with night vision goggles, guided mountain bike tours, guided running tours and tours guided from a cassette tape to be played in the vehicle of the touring party. Applications which have not received consideration include vendors and operations that are not consistent with what the natural resources offer.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

With the rapid growth of the population in the local vicinity and the increasing interest for commercial ventures in Red Rock Canyon, there is a need to determine appropriate allowable levels for the various commercial operations to ensure the avoidance of unacceptable resource impacts.

CONCERNS

Issuing too many commercial permits for activities, even though those activities are appropriate uses in RRCNCA, will result in unacceptable impacts to the resources.

Permits may be issued for commercial activities that are not really appropriate for operation within RRCNCA.

OPPORTUNITIES

Set maximum limits for the number of permits issued for various

commercial activities.

Determine which commercial operations are and which are not acceptable within RRCNCA.

ISSUE 12

How do we properly recognize and provide for Native American concerns?

BACKGROUND

Federal agencies have a special obligation to include the Native American community in the planning processes used to determine how Federal lands will be managed. This is supported by the passage of special laws addressing Native American rights and the granting of sovereign status to Indian tribes.

The purpose of consultation with the Native American community is to identify cultural values, religious beliefs, traditional practices, and the legal rights of Native American people which could be affected by BLM actions on Federal lands.

Cultural resources can usually be identified by archaeologists and mitigation can be determined to avoid physical impacts. The spiritual value is the more challenging aspect to consider in the planning process. The spiritual aspect, in this instance, includes the entire Spring Mountain vicinity and beyond. The concept of dividing the Spring Mountains into areas of greater and lesser spiritual value is not valid. It is necessary to have input from the local Native American communities to arrive at mutually acceptable management of the area.

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Red Rock Canyon is a focal point of local Native American spiritual beliefs. It is important to give strong consideration to these values throughout the planning process.

CONCERNS

Without adequate input from the Native American community, a lack of understanding of spiritual values would result in inappropriate management direction for the NCA.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity to work with the Native American community to develop the most mutually agreeable management for this issue.

Develop a management direction consistent with the policy

developed by the U.S. Forest Service.

The Forest Service manages the Spring Mountain National Recreation Area (SMNRA), which runs adjacent to the west boundary of RRCNCA. Together, they comprise an area central to the spiritual beliefs of the local Native American community. The Forest Service completed the management plan for the SMNRA and worked closely with local tribes to reach mutual agreement on management policy affecting Native American values. Because the two areas are not separate in regards to this issue, management policy should be consistent throughout.

PLANNING PROCESS AND SELECTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The planning process for the GMP is unique in that the process will have been completed two times before the plan is done. The initial process began in January of 1992 and ended in June of 1995 with the completion of the Interim General Management Plan (IGMP), which is intended to serve as the GMP for the National Conservation Area (NCA) until a final plan has been completed. Normally the process would have ended with the final plan at that time, but after a Proposed GMP/EA was printed and distributed for public review, congressional legislation was passed in November of 1994, which more than doubled the total acreage of the NCA. For this reason, along with concerns involving the level of analysis, it was decided to revisit the planning process and complete an Environmental Impact Statement as opposed to an Environmental Assessment. Although the entire planning process is being revisited, the information gathered in the first planning process is still relevant and will be utilized.

The planning process was re-initiated in September of 1995 with public scoping meetings held at the BLM District Office. The intent of scoping meetings is to discuss the project proposal and guiding direction, in this case the goals and objectives outlined in the NCA legislation, and gather concerns and comments to be considered in the planning process. Comments are also accepted via mail in response to letters sent out to interested parties on project mailing lists. All of the input gathered is reviewed, analyzed and condensed to derive the key issues, which orient the planning process to concentrate on the most significant concerns and conflicts to be resolved.

A valuable and positive aspect of this planning effort has been active public involvement throughout the planning process. A team of individuals representing the various environmental and recreational interests throughout the local community, along with representatives from commercial interests, the Native American community and other agencies, has been meeting with the BLM interdisciplinary team on a regular basis to continually review and assist in plan development (see Chapter 5 - Coordination and Consultation).

After the list of key issues is developed, the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) is completed. Drawn from inventories, studies, existing records and other sources, the AMS provides essential information and understanding about resource conditions and uses, management activities, and natural relationships to support subsequent actions. The AMS is a support document and is not actually part of the Plan/EIS document.

The list of issues, the AMS, and the planning criteria are used to formulate a range of plan alternatives. Planning criteria are

based on laws, regulations, agency direction, input from other agencies, and analysis of available data and information (see Planning Criteria in Plan portion of this document). Plan alternatives offer a range of possibilities to provide for multiple-use management while addressing the issues derived from scoping. One alternative must be a "no action" alternative, which would propose the continuation of the present management scenario.

Once the alternatives have been designed, each alternative must be analyzed to deduce what affects implementing the proposed actions would have on the existing environment. The implementation of the proposed actions may result in positive or negative impacts. The alternatives can then be compared as to how well goals and objectives are met, issue resolution, and the environmental consequences of implementing the proposed actions. After reviewing the comparison of alternatives, the lead agency selects a preferred alternative, which they feel best meets the comparison criteria.

All of the information and proposal development derived from the planning process is assimilated into a Draft Plan/EIS and is distributed for review by the agencies, organizations, and general public concerned. Public meetings are again held to allow feedback, concerns and alternative preference. The comments collected at the meetings and those expressed in written commentary during the review period are studied and adjustments are made to the Draft Plan to develop the actual proposed Plan. Final approval of the Plan is made by the Nevada State Director.

Once the Plan is in place, it is continually monitored and evaluated to determine progress toward established goals and objectives. This also serves to determine impact levels from management actions and whether mitigation measures are satisfactory. Through proper monitoring and evaluation, the useful life of a plan may be extended.

In summary, the planning process follows a progression of phases involving the following nine elements.

1. Identification of Issues
2. Development of Planning Criteria
3. Inventory Data and Information Collection
4. Analysis of the Management Situation
5. Formulation of Alternatives
6. Estimation of the Effects of Alternatives
7. Selection of Preferred Alternative
8. Selection of the Resource Management Plan
9. Monitoring and Evaluation

ALTERNATIVES SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

An important aspect of the planning process for all major actions is to create a range of alternatives from which to select the preferred plan to govern the proposed action. Each alternative should be based on the project goals and objectives, the list of developed issues, and the affects that implementing the actions proposed will have on the natural environment. Although each alternative considers these criteria, they will differ in that the focus of each leans more toward certain aspects that need to be considered and less on others. In all circumstances, one of the alternatives proposed must be a "no action" alternative, under which no changes to the current management regime would occur.

A range including four alternatives has been developed for the RRCNCA General Management Plan. The gist of each is described in the following paragraphs.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

This alternative emphasizes biodiversity enhancement. Included are specific actions designed to enhance riparian restoration, biological preservation, and ecosystem health. Recreational access and proposed facilities are concentrated within the developed Scenic Drive area. The miles of dirt roads remaining open, while still substantial, is reduced to a minimum and limited recreation enhancements and developments are proposed.

ALTERNATIVE 1

This alternative focuses more on facilities development and associated recreation opportunities. Access would be more readily available with a more extensive trail system and fewer dirt roads being closed. Biodiversity enhancement would be less encompassing than in other alternatives with fewer specific enhancement actions being proposed.

ALTERNATIVE 2

This is the "No Action" alternative, meaning that the NCA would continue to be managed under the existing situation. Presently, the governing document for the NCA is the Interim General Management Plan (IGMP). The original intent of the IGMP was to administer the NCA until the completion of a final plan. The planning analysis for the IGMP did not include the expanded portions of the NCA since the expansion occurred after analysis had been completed.

ALTERNATIVE 3

Alternative 3 features a full array of actions promoting biodiversity, with some reduction to dirt road access and moderate enhancement of the trails network.

ALTERNATIVE 4

This alternative favors biodiversity, providing a greater number of actions promoting riparian restoration, biological preservation, and ecosystem management. The dirt road network is reduced to a minimum and the fewest recreation enhancements are proposed.

Although the focus of the individual alternatives varies, there are also actions that are favored regardless of the alternative selected. These actions are part of each alternative and are included under the heading of Management Common To All Alternatives. Each alternative must also abide by the Standard Operating Procedures, which are based on laws, regulations and policy.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD

ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

2-Way Road between Scenic Drive Exit & N Oak Creek Road

The intent of the 2-way section of road was to simplify access to some of the escarpment canyons and trails toward the end of the Scenic Drive. Due to the implementation of the entrance fee at the entrance of the Scenic Drive, this action is now moot and is no longer being considered.

Shuttle Frontage Road

The frontage road, paralleling State Route 159 between the entrance and exit of the Scenic Drive, was not a particularly popular proposal. The intent of the proposal was to allow shuttle operations, without conflicting with highway traffic. This proposal has been dropped, although the possibility of a shuttle system being implemented at some future date remains an option for consideration.

TRAILS

Escarpment Crest Trail

This trial was proposed as optional, to be implemented only if necessary to mitigate damage to the resources from overuse and/or trailbraiding. It will not be included in any of the alternatives, although it could be considered at some future time if the above mentioned impacts become evident.

Base of the Escarpment Trail South of First Creek

The original proposal was to consider a trail all along the base of the escarpment from Lost Creek to State Route 160. The decision in the IGMP was to include the trail from First Creek north to Lost Creek and defer south of First Creek. The concern being that the canyons south of First Creek are in a more pristine state than those to the north, and additional analysis was needed to determine potential impacts. The canyons north of First Creek are already provided with direct access, so the additional trail would not increase the visits into the canyons significantly and may even reduce it due to the additional hiking options provided.

The escarpment trail north of First Creek is again considered in this document, although most of the

construction has already been completed. The gist of the consideration is to decide what uses are appropriate for different sections of the trail. After further review of the proposed escarpment trail south of First Creek, there has not been enough support for the proposal to justify further consideration.

DRILLING OF WELLS

Red Rock Herd Management Area south of State Route 160

A proposal was made that wells should be drilled in the area south of State Route 160 to supplement the limited amount of water available in this area for wild horses. Bird and Tunnel Springs have limited flows and Tunnel is dry periodically. This proposal was not carried forward because the artificial modification or creation of habitat, or more favorable habitat conditions, within the NCA, for the benefit of a single species, not identified as threatened, endangered, State sensitive or at risk, does not appear to meet the direction for managing the NCA included in the Act. If supplemental water sources and wells are required, they should be developed outside the NCA in the southern end of the HMA.